

TREATMENT AND RECOVERY: WHY IT'S WORTH IT

Treatment is one of many pathways to achieve recovery from behavioral health conditions such as mental, substance use, or co-occurring disorders. In 2010, 23.1 million people aged 12 or older needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem (9.1 percent of people aged 12 or older). Of these, 2.6 million (1 percent of people aged 12 or older and 11.2 percent of those who needed treatment) received treatment at a specialty facility.¹ Moreover, among 45.9 million Americans aged 18 and older who experienced any mental illness, just 17.9 million received mental health treatment.² Additionally, recovery support services provide individuals recovering from behavioral health conditions with the support, guidance, and assistance to maintain and sustain their recovery.

The 23rd annual National **Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** observance this September will celebrate the effectiveness of treatment services and the reality of recovery. This year's **Recovery Month** theme, **"Join the Voices for Recovery: It's Worth It,"** emphasizes that while the road to recovery may be difficult, the benefits of preventing and overcoming mental and/or substance use disorders are significant and valuable to individuals, families, and communities. People in recovery achieve healthy lifestyles, both emotionally and physically, and contribute in positive ways to their communities. They also prove to family members, friends, and others that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover.

Recovery Month is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Many of SAMHSA's **Strategic Initiatives** are fulfilled through **Recovery Month**, including helping people with mental and/or substance use disorders, their communities, and their families prevent and overcome costly behavioral health conditions, and promoting overall health and well-being for all Americans.

This document highlights treatment and recovery options for people with mental and/or substance use disorders – especially for adolescents and young adults. It discusses the importance of addressing co-occurring disorders, and the benefits of recovery.

Choose the Most Appropriate Treatment and Recovery Option

Because a wide range of treatment options exist, it's important to find what works best for you or your loved ones who need help. No single treatment option is effective for everyone; generally, each person will need a customized treatment plan that includes goals and treatment activities designed to help achieve and sustain recovery.^{3,4} This plan may need to be assessed continually and modified as necessary during the road to recovery.⁵ Consider the following questions:⁶

- Which substances are being used and misused?
- How severe is the substance use and misuse?
- Is there a co-occurring substance use and mental disorder?
- Are there any monetary and/or location limitations for this treatment option?

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My story of addiction began at age 12 when I started drinking and smoking marijuana. I had just moved to a new city, which meant starting a new school and making new friends. I wanted to fit in. By age 14, I was experimenting with other drugs. At 15, I started using opiates, and at 16, I was addicted to heroin and dropped out of high school. A year later, I was incarcerated for heroin possession. There would be many more drug-related offenses to follow, resulting in more than 10 years of incarceration over the next 35 years. Lost and lonely on the inside, I was mean and tough on the outside. I found myself in a cycle of drug addiction, treatment, and incarceration.

Eventually, long-term treatment offered me the foundation for a life in recovery. Now I am 10 years in recovery; I completed my bachelor's degree at the University of Massachusetts in June 2011 and am currently entering my second semester at Springfield College, working toward a master's degree in social work. I am a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor and a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor II.

I also became involved with [Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery \(MOAR\)](#) 6 years ago. I feel that becoming a visible, vocal advocate for improved addiction treatment and education, as well as public awareness, is essential to my newfound purpose in life.

Today, thanks to my recovery, I am a valuable, responsible member of society who is an employed, tax-paying voter and involved in my community. I am a man with honor, dignity, integrity, and respect. I am living proof that treatment works and recovery is possible. Each day of recovery, I feel victorious with much gratitude.

I now have a family, children, and grandchildren who not only love me, but respect me. I've had a career for 30 years and have not been fired. I have been able to gain self-respect and the respect of others. Changing my whole life was not easy, but the end result was well worth it.

Remember that treatment and recovery are ongoing – it's a process that unfolds over time, rather than a time-limited "event."⁷ Throughout this process, SAMHSA supports recovery-oriented systems of care (ROSC), in which each person is the central participant in his or her own recovery, and people must recognize the need for change and transformation. ROSC also acknowledges that there are many pathways to recovery. Recovery services should offer choices, honor each person's potential for growth, focus on a person's strengths, and attend to an individual's overall health and well-being.⁸

Self-Help Guide to Combat Substance Misuse

- **Avoid temptations.** Remove everything from your home and office that reminds you of drugs or alcohol.
- **Let people know.** Talk to friends, family members, and co-workers so they know that alcohol and/or drugs are not part of your life anymore.
- **Distance those who are unsupportive.** This may mean giving up certain friends.
- **Learn from the past.** What can you do differently this time to sustain recovery and avoid relapse?

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Treatment and Support Services for Mental Health Problems

Mental health problems are common and treatable. Approximately one in four Americans experiences a mental health disorder in a given year.⁹ Fortunately, between 70 percent and 90 percent of individuals with mental health problems have significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life with a combination of medication, therapy, and additional support.¹⁰ As with other chronic illnesses, individuals who seek treatment and recovery support services for mental health problems learn new life skills and go on to live healthy, empowered, and productive lives.

Psychotherapy

Treatment Option	Description
Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) ¹¹	Helps individuals identify distorted thinking patterns, recognize and change inaccurate beliefs, change behaviors, and relate to others in more positive ways; CBT can be used to treat depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and eating disorders
Psychoanalysis ¹²	Long-term therapy that seeks to identify unconscious motivations and early patterns to resolve issues; it helps people become aware of how those motivations influence present actions and feelings
Family-focused therapy (FFT) ¹³	Designed to include the whole family as way to identify difficulties and conflicts among family members that may contribute to or worsen an individual's mental health problem; FFT is a main component in treating bipolar disorder
Dialectical behavior therapy ¹⁴	Stresses the value of a strong and equal relationship between the individual and therapist; the individual is reminded when his or her behavior is unhealthy or disruptive and the therapist teaches skills needed to better deal with similar situations in the future
Interpersonal therapy ¹⁵	Works to improve communication patterns and helps people learn to express appropriate emotions in healthy ways and is commonly used to treat depression

Medication Therapy

Often used to treat the symptoms of mental health problems – they do not cure the conditions, but can help people feel better and maintain normal daily routines; health care professionals should be contacted regarding the risks, possible side effects, and using the medication with certain foods, alcohol, and other medications; prescription medications must be taken in the prescribed dosage, at prescribed intervals, and monitored daily.¹⁶

Support Groups

Can be used to find support and common ground – some groups are led by peers, others by a mental health professional; a variety of organizations specialize in different mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, bipolar disorder, autism, depression, eating disorders); most offer groups for individuals, family members, and friends tailored to their needs.¹⁷

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Treatment and Recovery Support Services for Substance Use Disorders

Half of all adults over age 18 know someone in recovery from an addiction to alcohol, illicit drugs, or prescription drugs.¹⁸ Individuals with an alcohol or drug dependency need to acknowledge their problem; reach out to family, friends, or health care professionals for help; and receive treatment.

The charts below describes some treatment and recovery support services for substance use disorders.

Inpatient Treatment Programs

Located in a hospital or residential setting, where people participate in rehabilitation and recovery.¹⁹

Option	Description	Best Suited For
Hospital-based rehabilitation units ²⁰	Focus is on stabilizing the patient and not on long-term addiction, treatment, and education; Patients are often referred from a unit to a hospital-based drug rehab facility to participate in a complete alcohol and drug addiction treatment program	People who suffer from drug addiction or alcoholism and have developed chronic or acute medical and psychiatric problems along with their addiction
Inpatient residential programs and therapeutic communities ²¹	Provide a living environment with treatment services lasting from a month to a year or more; offer phases of treatment with different activities and expectations, such as rebuilding family relationships or starting to work again	Those who do not have stable living, employment situations, and/or family support, as well as those who have been unable to sustain recovery with other forms of treatment

Outpatient Treatment Programs

Offer flexibility by not requiring individuals to live at the treatment facility, as people return for services through scheduled visits; enable participants to work or attend school.²²

Option	Description	Best Suited For
Individual counseling ²³	Helps people address issues of motivation and build skills to resist substance use through coping strategies; uses behavioral therapy to modify attitudes and behaviors and improve relationships and life skills	Individuals who need one-on-one counseling
Medication-assisted treatment ^{24, 25}	Uses medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies to provide a whole-patient approach to treatment	Those who need medication for opioid detoxification, alcohol detoxification or dependence, or maintenance treatment
Family counseling ²⁶	Led by a professional, usually in a private practice or clinic – a neutral forum – for families to work through problems	Families that need to improve communication and those who need to learn about substance use disorders
Group therapy ²⁷	Reduces isolation, enables members to witness the recovery of others, provides positive peer support, helps members cope with their condition, offers useful information to those new to recovery, and instills hope	Those who need to reduce their isolation and who benefit from witnessing the recovery stories of others

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Recovery Support Services

Non-clinical options that provide help through all stages of the recovery journey and focus on a continuum of care to achieve and maintain long-term abstinence from alcohol and/or drugs.²⁸

Option	Description	Best Suited For
Peer-to-peer support programs²⁹	Provided by leaders in the recovery community who are often in recovery themselves; builds strong and mutually supportive relationships and can expand the capacity of formal treatment by initiating recovery, reducing relapse, and intervening early if or when relapse occurs	Individuals who benefit from strengths-based services that emphasize social support to help maintain lifestyle change
Mutual support groups³⁰	Comprised of members with similar problems who want to voluntarily provide social, emotional, and informational support; includes well-known programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous , Narcotics Anonymous , and other non-12-step programs such as SMART Recovery®	People who thrive in an open environment and are willing to share experiences and solutions to problems
Faith-based support groups³¹	Provides low-cost or free of charge support or treatment	People who want to incorporate faith or spirituality into their recovery
Recovery schools³²	Provides academic services and assistance with recovery and continuing care; does not usually operate as a treatment center or mental health agency, but requires that all students enrolled in the program be free of drugs and alcohol and in recovery; to find a location near you, visit Association of Recovery Schools	Those who need to receive their education in a safe, supportive environment with embedded recovery support

Online Support Services

Enable people to participate in treatment from any location, when their schedule permits, and are useful for people with limited transportation or childcare, as well as rural populations and areas with limited in-person treatment options.

Option	Description	Best Suited For
E-therapy services³³	Offers participants electronic counsel through text-based communication methods (e.g., email, Internet chats, text messaging) or non-text-based communication methods (e.g., telephone, video conferencing)	Individuals who need support with flexibility in terms of time and location
Recovery chat rooms/forums	Offers an open structure for people to share their stories with fellow members of the recovery community; conversations can focus on specific topics, such as co-occurring disorders or different stages of recovery, and allow people to anonymously connect with others; well-known locations include http://www.intherooms.com and http://reneweveryday.com	People who want to connect online to find those with similar interests or conditions
Blogs and social networking sites	Includes sites such as Facebook and Twitter that allow people to connect with others in treatment and recovery	People who are interested in reading others' stories and sharing their own to connect and offer support

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Consider the Benefits of Embracing Recovery

The recovery journey, while unique for every individual, can be defined as a process of change whereby individuals work to improve their own health and wellness and to live a meaningful life in a community of their choice, while striving to achieve their full potential.³⁴ When suffering from a mental and/or substance use disorder, a person might feel a loss of control. The first step to recovery is taking back control by making changes to improve one's life. Lifestyle changes during and after treatment to support one's recovery may include ending dysfunctional relationships in lieu of healthier ones, resolving personal problems, eating healthier, and getting enough rest and exercise.

When embarking on a recovery journey, it is possible to accomplish recovery goals that benefit many aspects of life, including:³⁵

- **Health:** Overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms – and make informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being;
- **Home:** Finding a stable and safe place to live that supports recovery;
- **Purpose:** Participating in meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteer activities, and hobbies; and
- **Community:** Engaging in relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

If you know someone who is suffering from a mental and/or substance use disorder, there are ways to motivate people to seek help. An individual's motivation to change can be strongly influenced by family, friends, and community support.³⁶ People don't necessarily have to "hit rock bottom" to realize they need to change and/or seek treatment.³⁷

Recovery makes
it possible for
people to:*



Feel better emotionally and physically



Have time to do things they enjoy



Improve their quality of life



Experience less stress

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Understand Mental and/or Substance Use Disorders Among Adolescents and Young Adults

During transitional periods from one developmental stage to another, adolescents and young adults are at higher risk of mental or substance use disorders.³⁸ For example, when graduating from junior high to high school, many are faced with larger challenges and may be subject to peer pressure or psychological bullying by older students. Additionally, half of all mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders are diagnosed by age 14 and three-fourths were diagnosed by age 24, which further underscores the critical nature of this time period.³⁹ It is important to watch for emotional and/or physical changes in an adolescent or young adult during these times and address any issues that may arise.

Mental health problems, especially depression, anxiety disorders, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders, are prevalent among adolescents and young adults.⁴⁰ Approximately one out of every four to five youth meet the criteria for a severe mental disorder resulting in severe impairment across their lifetime.⁴¹ Additionally, it is estimated that 73 percent of the youth in correctional facilities have reported mental health problems during screenings.⁴²

Like mental health problems, substance use disorders are very common in adolescents and young adults. In 2010, there were 1.8 million youths aged 12 to 17 who needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem.⁴³ Additionally, of those 1.8 million adolescents, only 138,000 received treatment at a specialty facility.⁴⁴ Fortunately, effective, specialized treatment and recovery services are available that specifically address the unique challenges of adolescents and young adults.

Research has found that providing adolescents and young adults with treatment designed specifically for their age group significantly reduces substance use and improves psychological outcomes, as well as school performance.⁴⁵ Treatment options vary for adolescents and young adults. It's best to speak with a health professional to decide on an approach that involves flexibility and actively matches the person's needs to available services.⁴⁶ Below are other important qualities that a comprehensive treatment plan should include.⁴⁷

- Targeted sessions that address large issues such as trauma, victimization, or depression;
- Mental health services that further assess the condition and include medication management;
- Substance use sessions that approach adolescents at the appropriate level of social and cognitive development;
- Family programming, including parent education, family counseling, and home visits;
- Recovery support services such as transportation, case management, and coordination of care;
- Comprehensive health care, including treatment for sexually transmitted diseases or other conditions such as asthma/respiratory problems; and
- Recreational activity and exposure to activities not involving drugs or alcohol.

Also keep in mind that support and encouragement from family and friends can have a profound impact on an individual's recovery from mental health or substance use disorders. For more information, visit the **"Families And Friends Can Make A Difference"** section of this toolkit.

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Address Co-Occurring Disorders

A co-occurring disorder means an individual has both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition, such as depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder, for example.⁴⁸ About half of individuals with a severe mental disorder are also affected by substance abuse.⁴⁹ More specifically, 37 percent of individuals with an alcohol abuse issue and 53 percent of individuals with a drug abuse issue have at least one serious mental illness.⁵⁰ Like mental and substance use disorders alone, co-occurring disorders affect all aspects of people's lives, including their families, friends, and co-workers.⁵¹ In 2010, 9.2 million adults aged 18 or older with any mental health illness also had substance use disorders in the past year.⁵² Fortunately, with an integrated treatment approach, support, education, and courage, those diagnosed with co-occurring disorders can learn how to manage their disorders and achieve and sustain recovery.⁵³

Both mental and/or substance use disorders are long-term conditions, so treatment for a co-occurring disorder may take place over an extended period of time.⁵⁴ By receiving coordinated, combined, or integrated treatment from the same clinician or treatment team, those with co-occurring disorders have a much better chance of long-term recovery.⁵⁵ Additionally, other problems that stem from a co-occurring disorder can be helped through recovery support services. Effective treatment can help reduce the risk of relapse, hospitalizations, financial problems, family problems, homelessness, suicide, violence, sexual and physical victimization, incarceration, serious medical illnesses such as HIV and hepatitis B and C, and premature death.⁵⁶

Since recovery is a continuous journey, it is important that individuals with co-occurring disorders find effective programs that include rehabilitation activities to help prevent relapses and integrate individuals back into society.⁵⁷

Additional Recovery Resources

A variety of resources provide additional information on **Recovery Month** and mental, substance use, and co-occurring disorders, as well as prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. The toll-free numbers and websites below are available for people to share their experiences, learn from others, and seek help from professionals. Through these resources, individuals can interact with others and find support on an as-needed, confidential basis.

- **SAMHSA's Website** – Leads efforts to reduce the impact of mental and/or substance use disorders on communities nationwide.
- **SAMHSA's National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) – or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD)** – Provides 24-hour, free and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and/or substance use disorders, prevention, and recovery in English and Spanish.
- **SAMHSA's "Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment" Website** – Contains information about treatment options and special services located in your area.
- **SAMHSA's "Co-Occurring Disorders" Website** – Contains information on co-occurring disorders, treatment, issues, and facts.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**: Provides a free, 24-hour helpline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

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- **Treatment 101:** Recovery Today: Part of SAMHSA's *Road to Recovery* **Television** and **Radio** series that examines many aspects of treatment and recovery.
- **Psychology Today's Therapy Directory** – Allows users to locate a therapist, psychologist, or counselor who specializes in mental health problems by city or zip code throughout the United States.
- **Mental Health America** – Offers resources about the realities of mental health and mental illness.
- **RecoverForever.com** – Offers live online support and contains an abundance of resources on alcohol and drug treatment services that are searchable by State.
- **Alcoholics Anonymous** and **Narcotics Anonymous** – Contains an array of resources for individuals suffering from alcohol or drug dependence, respectively, and allows them to find and join a local chapter.
- **Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups** – Provides support groups for families and friends of people with alcohol problems.
- **Nar-Anon** – Offers a community for family members to share experiences related to substance use disorders.

Inclusion of websites and resources in this document and on the *Recovery Month* website does not constitute official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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